

# *The Influence of Medical Poets on English Poetry*

(Presidential address to the Section of the History of Medicine, Royal Society of Medicine, 3rd October, 1945, by Sir Arthur Salusbury MacNalty, K.C.B., M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.)

*"It is well known that Apollo was the God of Medicine, but also the President of Parnassus.*

*"And so it is no wonder that in later ages many of the children of medicine, inflamed with the divine fire, tried to express the mysteries of their art in verse and to contribute to the world their salutary songs:"* Preface to *Myologia Herioco Carmine Expressa*, by Dr. Charles Spon, physician to King Louis XIV, printed in Manget's *Bibliotheca anatomica*.

These words remind me of the contribution that members of the medical profession have made to poetry. The number of medical poets is very numerous. C. L. Dana<sup>(1)</sup> in his bibliographical work *Poetry and the Doctors*, gives a list of 156 names, and this list is not altogether complete.

As Dana wrote: "I presume that a reason for the doctor's frequent digression into the high fields of song is because genuinely successful physicians must have some feeling and imagination; such men see and recognize and are responsive to the emotional and human side of life. They sympathize with trouble and are touched by the conflicts of those with whom they have to deal". And so these children of Apollo lay aside the rod of Aesculapius and take up the lyre.

This association of the Muses with Medicine began in the distant past. The philosophy of Empedocles (B.C. 500) was written in heroic verse and Empedocles contributed two or three epigrams to the Greek Anthology. Those who love the poetry of Theocritus, who flourished at Syracuse *circa* 282 B.C., will remember his friend Nicias, the physician-poet. When Nicias was disappointed in love, Theocritus bade him turn to poetry as a consolation.<sup>(2)</sup>

"Methinks all nature hath no cure for Love,  
Plaster or unguent, Nicias, saving one:  
And this is light and pleasant to a man,  
Yet hard withal to compass—minstrelsy.  
As well thou wottest, being thyself a leech,  
And a prime favourite of those Sisters nine."

Nicias was consoled and married "Theugenis of the dainty feet". She was a good housewife and hence we have from Theocritus that delightful idyll of "The Distaff".<sup>(2)</sup> In sending her an ivory distaff, the poet wrote:

"To the home I now transfer thee of a man who knows full well  
Every craft whereby men's bodies dire diseases may repel;  
There to live in sweet Miletus. Lady of the Distaff she  
Shall be named and oft reminded of her poet-friend by thee."

It would take many meetings of this Section to trace the lives and writings of medical poets down the centuries. Neither can we linger to speak of technical medical poets like Fracastorius who wrote the famous

Epic on Syphilis, the Spaniard Diego del Cobo, author of a surgery in verse, Charles Spon, who described in hexameters the origin and insertion of the muscles in the human body, or Sir Samuel Garth, M.D. (Cantab), F.R.C.P., who wrote *The Dispensary*.

My subject is to inquire how medical poets have helped to develop and adorn British poetry, and to see how far their training and experience as practitioners of medicine enabled them to do so. To aid me in this task I have chosen certain doctors as exemplars, whose claim to sit on the heights of Parnassus can hardly be challenged. They are representative of stages in the history of English poetry and their influence upon it has been important and far-reaching.

### CHAUCER, SPENSER AND THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

Chaucer is one of the greatest English poets, and in the *Canterbury Tales* describes a Doctour of Phisyk "grounded in astronomye", familiar with medical writings, "a verrey parfit practisour". This physician was a man of classical culture, for his tale of the hapless Virginia is taken from Titus Livius. There is some hint here of the association between medicine and poetry, and earlier still John of Gaddesden, M.D. Oxford (b. 1280) was something of a poet, for his *Rosa Anglica* contains many apt verses.

In Chaucer's poetry can be traced three distinct periods: the French period when he began to write in France; the Italian period, when he went to Italy for the king on two diplomatic missions, in which his poems bear the influence of the Renaissance and of the classics; and the English period when (except in the borrowing of his subjects) he became entirely English. But the origins of all poetry lie in the Greek and Latin poets. Many of our greatest poets have quaffed deep draughts of the Pierian Spring, and knowledge of the classics has enriched English poetry from Chaucer down to Robert Bridges.

After Chaucer English poetry languished until the Elizabethan age, when its rejuvenation was splendid and glorious. The apparent suddenness of the great literary outburst of the days of Spenser and Shakespeare has been an object of wonder. It was heralded when poetry was revived as an art in the amorous poetry of Wyatt and Surrey—"sonnets mingled with lyrical pieces after the manner of Petrarcha". The sonnet is the most classical form of verse. It consists of fourteen lines of ten syllables, or five feet, each, the favourite Elizabethan grouping being three staves of four lines with alternate rhymes and a final rhymed couplet. It was brought to its highest perfection by Shakespeare, who, also, demonstrated what high flights could be attained by Surrey's other experiments in blank verse.

Edmund Spenser is among the very greatest of our poets. In 1569, when yet a schoolboy at Merchant Taylors, as is well known, he contributed to a small volume, a miscellany of verse and prose entitled: *A Theatre, wherein be represented as wel the miseries and calamities that follow the voluptuous worldlings as also the greate joys and pleasures which the faithfull*

do enjoy. An argument both profitable and delectable to all that sincerely love the Word of God. Devised by S. John Vander Noodt. It contained translations from Marot's version of one of the canzoni of Petrarca and from some sonnets by Du Bellay, which were afterwards included in Spenser's *Complaints* of 1591. What is not so well known is that Van der Noodt was a refugee Flemish physician. Hence it was a medical editor who recognized and encouraged Spenser's youthful genius and first brought his poetry to public notice. Spenser recreated English prosody, giving it fluidity and grace and extending its range; he created English poetic diction. As E. de Selincourt (3) observes: "By means of this rich and varied style, fully expressive of his high seriousness, his spirituality, his inexhaustible sense of beauty, he has exercised a spell that has been potent for three centuries, and none has called so many poets to their vocation".

Spenser is "the poet's poet". Sir Walter Scott said of his own youth, "But Spenser I could have read for ever". Cowley states that he was drawn to poetry by reading his mother's copy of *The Faerie Queene* (Essay XI, On Myself); and Keats, who read *The Faerie Queene* at sixteen, had the stream of his inspiration long coloured by the rich soil over which it flowed, as Lord Houghton (4) phrased it. Remembering these instances, we may discount Macaulay's (5) carping criticism on the tediousness of the allegory.

An early admirer and imitator of Spenser was Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650). Fletcher was a clergyman, an M.A. and B.D. of Cambridge. His chief work is *The Purple Island or the Isle of Man* (1633), a poem in twelve cantos of seven-line stanzas. The island is the body of man, the bones are the foundations, the veins stand for brooks and so forth. The description includes an account of the vices and virtues to which man is subject and there are copious anatomical notes in prose. The poem is in fact a medical allegory.

The poetry of Elizabeth's reign ran parallel to the growth of the national life. The first years after 1580 reveal an ardent youthful spirit, a poetry of love and romance and imagination; later on, with discovery and the ever-present threat of Spanish aggression, there was a great outburst of national enthusiasm, as shown by the historical plays and patriotic poems. Later still, national thought became graver and poetry grew more philosophical.

#### THOMAS CAMPION

In 1605 William Camden, the historian, published *Remains of a Larger Work concerning Britain*, in which the following passage occurs: "These may suffice for some poetical descriptions of our ancient poets: if I would come to our own time, what a world could I present to you out of Sir Philipp Sidney, Ed. Spenser, Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben Johnson, Th. Campion, Michael Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston, William Shakespeare and other most pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire". In this illustrious galaxy we find the

name of a medical poet, Thomas Campion, and the passage proves the high esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries.

We owe our knowledge of Thomas Campion, poet, musician and physician, in great part to Sir Sylvanus Vivian, (6) who has written his life and edited his works.

Thomas Campion, M.D. (1567-1619) was educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, but took no degree there. Some Campions were Roman Catholics—Edmund Campion, the first of the English Jesuit martyrs, was possibly a member of the same family—but the poet appears to have been a moderate Anglican.\* He received, as his scholarship shows, a sound classical education. He was admitted a member of Gray's Inn in 1586, and wrote a song, "Of Neptune's Empire let us sing," for the Gray's Inn Masque in 1594, but he was never called and in his Latin epigrams reveals a distaste for the law.

There is a reference to Campion as a poet in George Peele's *Honour of the Garter*, published in 1593, so by that time his unprinted English poems were known to his friends. His book of Latin epigrams was published in 1594, but it was not until 1601 that his first collection of English poems, *A Book of Airs*, appeared.

Poetic criticism began in the Elizabethan Age and indicates the interest shown in poetry. William Webbe, George Puttenham, Sir Philip Sidney and Gabriel Harvey all produced critical discourses. The subject attracted Campion, who published *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), in which he animadverted against "the vulgar and unartificial custom of riming", and advocated the substitution of classical metres, chiefly the iambic and trochaic, for the usual rhymed verse.

The same year brought forth a counterblast, entitled *An Apologie for Ryme*, from Samuel Daniel in which he termed Campion "a man of fair parts and good reputation", and deplored that the attack should have come from one "whose commendable rhymes, albeit now himself an enemy to rhyme, have given heretofore to the world the best notice of his worth".

Ben Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden (8) that he had written a "Discourse of Poesie" both against Campion and Daniel, "wher he proves couplets to be the bravest sort of verses", but this never saw the light. As Vivian remarks, Campion's practice was fortunately unaffected by his precept.

In 1606 Campion wrote a short poetic foreword to Barnabe Barnes's *Four Books of Offices* inscribed "In Honour of the Author by Tho. Campion, Doctor in Physic. This is the first record of his profession. At what University he obtained his medical degree is unknown. Vivian agrees with Dr. Jessop that for special reasons Campion probably studied medicine at one of the Continental Universities. His second collection of Latin

\* Vivian (6) notes (p. xxvii) that no sincere Catholic, however loyal, could have alluded to Queen Elizabeth as "Faith's pure shield, the Christian Diana". See also *Poemata, Ad Thamestin and Thomas Campion and the Art of English Poetry*, by Thomas MacDonagh, Dublin, 1913, p. 9.

epigrams (1619) contains numerous allusions to physicians or their art and one of the epigrams in Book II, 'Ad Lectorem', explains that since the publication of the earlier book in 1594 he had turned to more sober studies—medicine and music—and implies that he had to work for his living. He was then a practising physician and is referred to in a satirical poem "Of London Physicians" found in the MS. commonplace book of a Cambridge scholar (*circa* 1611):

"How now Doctor Campion,  
Musick's and poesie's stout Champion,  
Will you nere leave prating?"

On the occasion of the marriage of Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, with Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, Campion wrote a masque for it. It will be remembered that this precious pair were concerned together with Sir Gervase Elwes, the Lieutenant of the Tower, in the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury, who had opposed the marriage. When later on the crime was divulged, Sir Thomas Monson, a leading Roman Catholic, was imprisoned in the Tower for alleged complicity in the murder and was professionally attended there by Campion. Campion, himself, was examined regarding money he had received from Alderman Elwes, father of Sir Gervase Elwes, for the use of Monson. The latter was pardoned in 1617; and Campion dedicated his *Third Book of Airs* to him with congratulations that "those clouds which lately overcast Your fame and fortune are dispersed at last".

Campion was not altogether a kindly man; he had his enmities and antipathies, as the epigrams show. He fell out with Chapman, Barnes, Nicholas Breton and others. But he had many friendships and admired Spenser, to whom he addressed a Latin distich. He is chiefly renowned as a lyrical poet. It is the lyrics in his masques which please one, for the masques show little sense of dramatic feeling or construction. W. E. Henley described him as "a curious metrist" and Vivian (<sup>7</sup>) writes: "Campion's metres are not only curious, but sometimes perplexing; and occasionally they almost baffle analysis. . . . Nevertheless, the general effect of these shifting metres is exceedingly beautiful". And he goes on to point out that Campion's songs were written primarily and solely for musical composition and wedded to his own music.

Here is the first verse of Campion's "Cherry-Ripe", which reveals the beauty of his muse:

"There is a garden in her face  
Where roses and white lilies blow;  
A heavenly paradise is that place,  
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow;  
There cherries grow which none can buy  
Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves do cry."

Vivian (<sup>7</sup>) sums up the high place which Campion takes in English poetry in the following words: "In every one of the songs we take up there is some new charm, either of fancy, metre or diction, for his poetry is

almost infinitely various, and always fresh and vivid. Even when matched for beauty of expression or surpassed for wealth of imagination, he is still a master of subtle cadences, a lord of haunting rhythms and delicate measures, whom in his kingdom few have approached and certainly none have excelled".

### THE CAROLINE DEVOTIONAL POETS

Campion, in his devotional poems exhibits, as A. R. Bullen(<sup>9</sup>) said, a rare combination of spiritual fervour and lyrical beauty, and some reference is appropriate to the devotional element in English poetry, which was a feature of the period between James I and the Restoration. The Caroline poets, as they are called, were either love poets or religious poets. Often, as in the case of Herrick and Crashaw, they wrote in both veins. That "sweet singer", George Herbert, is by the purity and devotion of his poems beloved by all. Other devotional poets were Giles Fletcher, Henry Vaughan, John Donne, William Habington, George Wither and Francis Quarles.

The medical poets take their share in this religious interlude. Not only Thomas Campion and Henry Vaughan but also Sir Thomas Browne, M.D. (Leyden and Oxon.) (1605-1682) wrote religious verse. The *Religio Medici* and his other prose writings are full of poetic feeling. Bulwer Lytton(<sup>10</sup>) wrote in 1836: "The *Religio Medici* is one of the most beautiful prose poems in the language; its power of diction, its subtlety and largeness of thought, its exquisite conceits and images, have no parallel out of the writers of that brilliant age, when Poetry and Prose had not yet divided their domain, and the Lyceum of Philosophy was watered by the Ilissus of the Nine". The poetic character of Browne's writings has since been enlarged upon by Pater(<sup>11</sup>), by Gosse(<sup>12</sup>) and by Saintsbury.(<sup>13</sup>) We possess a few specimens of Sir Thomas's poetry in the three verse pieces in *Religio Medici*, in a number of bits of doggerel, and one that is beautiful in his "Evening Hymn":

"Sleep is a death: oh, make me try  
By sleeping, what it is to die;  
And then as gently lay my head  
Upon my grave, as now my bed:  
Howe'er I rest, great God, let me  
Awake again at last with thee."

It is by his prose and not by his metrical effusions that Sir Thomas Browne ranks as a medical poet.

### ABRAHAM COWLEY AND THE METAPHYSICAL POETS

With the passing of the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth, the fresh and impassioned poetry of her reign, which had glowed with youthful life and national fervour, grew chill, and poets tried to produce by far-fetched images, coined and extravagant words and over-fanciful expressions, the same results which ardent feeling had inspired. They were

encouraged in this fantastic course by the approval of their pedantic monarch, King James I, who wrote poems himself.

It is sometimes said that in the decline of the greater poetry of the Elizabethan period a "metaphysical school" arose, of which Donne was the founder or the first eminent member. Professor Dowden<sup>(14)</sup> remarked that this so-called "metaphysical school" never existed. Much of Donne's characteristic poetry belongs to the reign of Elizabeth, but the delight in subtleties of thought, in over-ingenious fantasies, in far-fetched imagery, in curiosity of expression was accentuated in the reigns of James I and Charles I. A leading exponent of these metaphysical flights was Abraham Cowley, M.D. (Oxon.). He was born in London in 1618, the seventh and posthumous child of Thomas Cowley, a stationer. He is the most precocious of poets, for he published *Poetical Blossoms*, a collection of five juvenile poems in 1633, which includes "The tragical history of Pyramus and Thisbe", written when he was ten years old, and "Constantia and Philetus", written two years after. Educated at Westminster School, he wrote at the age of 16 a pastoral comedy called *Love's Riddle*, but he found difficulty in learning Latin and Greek grammar. In 1637 he became a scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge (B.A., 1639; "minor fellow", 1640; M.A., 1642). On 12th March, 1641, Prince Charles was entertained at Cambridge by Cowley's improvised comedy, *The Guardian*. In 1658 this was rewritten and performed as *The Cutter of Coleman Street* in 1661 at Lincoln's Inn Fields, when Pepys was present. Cowley wrote the greater part of his ponderous epic the *Davideis* at Cambridge. It was published in his collected poems in 1656. Originally planned to occupy twelve books and to culminate with the lament of David for Jonathan, he mercifully found "neither the appetite nor leisure" to complete more than four books.

A staunch Royalist, Cowley was ejected from Cambridge by the Parliament in 1643-4 and found a refuge in St. John's College, Oxford. At Oxford he obtained court favour through his satire, *The Puritan and Papist*; and in 1646 when Oxford surrendered, he followed Queen Henrietta Maria to Paris. He became secretary to Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Albans and was employed in various diplomatic missions to Jersey, Holland and elsewhere. He also conducted the correspondence in cipher between the Queen and Charles I. In spite of his poem, "The Chronicle", in which he mentions a number of successive loves, Barnes (*Anacreon*, 1705, xxxii) states that Cowley was never in love but once in his life and then never dared to avow his passion. Pope says the lady was one Leonora, who married his biographer's brother.

In 1656 Cowley was sent to England to obtain information for the Royalist cause. He was arrested by mistake for another person and released on bail for £1,000, Dr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Scarborough—to whom one of his odes is addressed—becoming his security. Cowley was created M.D. at Oxford on 2nd December, 1657, by an order from the Government. This acquiescence in the Commonwealth gave great

offence to his friends, but Dr. Sprat states that he only took to medicine as a blind for his real designs. Sir John Squire tells me that Cowley's choice of Oxford for his medical degree was probably a matter of convenience. He was a loyal son of Cambridge, and his sentiments would not have been in accord with those of Dryden, also a Cambridge man, who wrote:

"Oxford to him a dearer name shall be  
Than his own Mother University:  
*Thebes* did his green, unknowing Youth ingage;  
He chuses *Athens* in his riper age."

(*Prologue to the University of Oxford*. *Miscellanies*, 1684.)

Cowley never attempted practice. He contemplated at one time abandoning poetry and busying himself in some obscure retreat in America. Considering botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants and composed in Latin several books, of which the first and second treat of the qualities of herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth the beauties of flowers, in various measures; and the fifth and sixth, the use of trees, in heroic numbers. He became one of the early Fellows of the Royal Society and wrote an ode to it. He was associated with John Evelyn and others in a project for the foundation of a philosophical college, for which he sets out a detailed plan in his essays. His later poems bear frequent allusions to medicine and the sciences, some not altogether felicitous, and his "Ode to Hobbes" betokens his lively interest in the new speculations of the time.

After the Restoration Cowley was an unsuccessful applicant for the mastership of the Savoy, but he was eventually solaced by a favourable lease of lands belonging to the Queen. This enabled him to seek the country retirement he had so often desired.

"O founts! Oh, when in you shall I  
Myself eased of unpeaceful thoughts espy?  
O fields! O woods! When, when shall I be made  
The happy tenant of your shade?  
Here's the spring-head of Pleasure's flood!  
Here's wealthy Nature's treasury  
Where all the riches lie that she  
Has coined and stamped for good."

Cowley went to Barn Elms and afterwards, in 1665, settled in the "Porch House" at Chertsey. But, like many another, retirement did not suit him, judging from a letter he wrote to Bishop Sprat. His health declined and he died on 28th July, 1667. He was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey, and Charles II declared that Mr. Cowley had not left a better man behind him in England.

Thomas Sprat (1636-1713), Bishop of Rochester, wrote Cowley's Life in 1668. This versatile divine, the historian of the Royal Society, when at Oxford wrote a medical poem, *The Plague of Athens* (1659). This was not the typhus described by Thucydides, but the severe epidemic which had

recently ravaged Naples. Sprat suggests that the physicians themselves helped innocently to disseminate the plague.

Abraham Cowley's poetry had a great vogue in his time. His poems entitled *The Mistress* were the favourite love poems of the day. Dryden and Congreve extolled him but, while appreciating his wit and genius, they realised that his poetry had all the faults of the metaphysical cult—extravagance, obscurity and harshness, the last predominant in his Pindaric Odes. Dr. Johnson analyses these faults of Cowley's poetry with copious illustrations, in his life of the poet. Pope, who had eulogised Cowley in *Windsor Forest*, exclaimed in 1737:

"Who now reads Cowley? If he pleases yet,  
His moral pleases, not his pointed wit;  
Forgot his epic, nay Pindaric art,  
But still I love the language of his heart."

*(Epistle to Augustus, 75-78.)*

When Cowley released himself from metaphysical trammels, his poetry was natural and unaffected, as in the verse previously quoted. His lyrical poems survive in modern anthologies and his essays are poetic, simple and graceful. His more correct phrasing and versification influenced the poetry of Dryden and Pope. In all he played no inconsiderable part in the development of the intellectual poetry of the neo-Augustan age, which displaced the metaphysical poets.

#### HENRY VAUGHAN, THE SILURIST

Another metaphysical medical poet was Henry Vaughan, M.D., "the Silurist". He was born at Newton, on the Usk, near Brecon, in 1621, the son of Henry Vaughan, educated along with his twin brother, Thomas, by the Rev. Matthew Herbert, Rector of Llangattock, where both brothers acquired a good knowledge of classical literature and penned Latin elegiacs to their preceptor. In 1638 they matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford. Their studies were interrupted by the Civil War. The two brothers fought on the King's side, and Henry speaks in one of his poems "of having been torn from the side" of a dear young friend, R. W., in the battle of Rowton Heath, near Chester, 1645.\* Thomas afterwards took orders, was expelled from his living by the Parliament, and became a chemist, an alchemist, a mystic and a Latin poet. He died in 1665, and his brother in a poem entitled "Daphnis" lamented his death.

Henry Vaughan published his first book of poems, including "the tenth satyre of Juvenal Englished", in 1646. He studied medicine in London and became M.D., but of what University is unknown. He retired at first to Brecon, and afterwards worked in his native place as a country practitioner for the rest of his life, dying on April 23, 1695, at the age of 73.

\* The late Miss Gwenllian Morgan, F.S.A., discovered that Henry Vaughan enlisted in Sir Herbert Price's regiment at the outbreak of the Civil War and served throughout with this regiment.

Vaughan, writing to Aubrey towards the end of his life, said: "My profession allso is physic, which I have practised now for many years with good successe (thanke God) and a repute big enough for a person of greater parts than myself".

Thomas Vaughan brought out a second volume of his brother's poems and translations, entitled *Olor Iscanus* ("the swan of the Usk") in 1647. About this time Henry Vaughan had a severe and lingering illness; this turned the character of his muse, which thenceforward dwelt only on religious and mystical subjects. In writing poetry of this character, he was much influenced by the poems of George Herbert. He composed a number of little "Sacred Poems and Pious Ejaculations" and printed them in a book entitled *Silex Scintillans* ("Sparks from the flintstone") in 1650. In 1652 appeared a little book of devotions in prose, *The Mount of Olives* and another prose work, *Flores Solitudinis*, came out in 1654. A second edition of *Silex Scintillans*, with further poems, was published in 1655. A book brought out by one of his zealous Oxford friends, "J. W." in 1678, was called *Thalia Rediviva; the passtimes and diversions of a Countrey Muse*. It consisted almost entirely of poems by Henry Vaughan, together with a few of his brother Thomas's Latin verses, but, like *Olor Iscanus*, Henry Vaughan was not responsible for the publication. In his life-time, except for the appreciation of his Oxford friends, he had no success either in poetry or prose. Hence for the remaining forty years of his life he published nothing, shunned public life and occupied himself in his profession and with the education of his family.

Vaughan sometimes lapses into the extravagance and affectation of wit characteristic of the metaphysical poets, but his poetry is a rare gift to the world. As Richard Garnett<sup>(15)</sup> said: "Vaughan's position among English poets is not only high, but in some respects unique. The pervading atmosphere of mystic rapture rather than isolated fine things, constitutes the main charm of his poems". Two of his poems, "The Retreat" and "They are all gone into the world of light", take place among the finest in the English language.

Of late years there has been an enhanced appreciation of the metaphysical poets, notably as regards the poems of John Donne and Henry Vaughan. Abraham Cowley has not benefited by this revived interest.

#### MILTON'S INFLUENCE ON POETRY

Humbert Wolfe<sup>(16)</sup> observed: "In every period there are distinguished writers who do not influence and are not influenced by their contemporaries in the sphere of creation". Such a writer was John Milton (1608-1674), who wrote in a grave and natural manner and "raised in song the moral passions into a solemn splendour". He stands apart, the last of the elder school of poetry. The new school of poetry personified by Dryden and Pope admired Milton but did not dare to voice their admiration. Dryden made "Paradise Lost" into an opera, the "State of Innocence", and turned Milton's sonorous blank verse into rhyming couplets. "Ay,

you may tag my verses if you will," were the words in which the blind poet gave his contemptuous consent to the desecration.

Milton's writings influenced a later generation of poets, and in particular two great medical poets. *Hyperion* owed so much to Milton that Keats shrank from completing it. Robert Bridges made experiments in Miltonic metres, and in his writings, *On the elements of Milton's Blank Verse in Paradise Lost* (1887), *On the Prosody of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes* (1889), in *Ibant Obscuri* and elsewhere, he made curious inquiry into the sources of Milton's metrical effects.

### THE NEO-AUGUSTAN AGE: DRYDEN AND POPE

It is germane here to note how greatly philosophy, the natural sciences and medicine directed the poetry of the neo-Augustan age, which was at its height during the reign of Queen Anne.\* Hobbes attacked the metaphysical conception of wit by associating it with judgment. The foundation of the Royal Society in 1662 aroused great interest in the growth of experimental science and the study of natural phenomena. Distrust of metaphysics became increasingly evident. Poetry became precise, clear and free from hyperbole and the poets listened to the natural philosophers; Dryden, for instance, was a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The poetry of the neo-Augustan age displayed the following features. It was hostile to enthusiasm, licence and extravagance; it dealt with the world, man and nature; it owed a great deal to the classics, for no man was then regarded as educated without a classical education; it sparkled with wit and personal allusions; it founded a new school of satirical poetry which in the heights achieved by Dryden and Pope has never been equalled or surpassed. But, as Lytton Strachey<sup>(17)</sup> said, it has no mysteries and infinitudes. It was a reasonable, clear and sensible poetry, and that was all the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries required.

There were many medical wits and poets in this age. While not pre-eminent, they had their share in fanning the divine spark which flamed in Dryden and Pope. John Arbuthnot, M.D. (Aberdeen and Cantab), F.R.C.P., was a master of satire, and the devoted friend of Pope and Swift. In his association with them in the *Martin Scriblerus Club*, his prose satiric writings influenced the prose of Swift and the poetry of Pope. Arbuthnot wrote in his last letter to Pope, "study more to *reform* than *chastise* though the one cannot be effected without the other". In the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (Prologue to the Satires)* Pope writes:

"Friend to my life (which did not you prolong,  
The world had wanted many an idle song)."

We are reasonably assured that Arbuthnot stimulated Pope's poetic gifts by his conversation and counsel as well as by his medical care.

\* This theme is well developed in a recent study of the subject by R. L. Sharp, entitled *From Donne to Dryden: The Revolt against Metaphysical Poetry*, 1940, University of North Carolina Press.

In the same Epistle, Pope speaks with gratitude of the poet-physician, Sir Samuel Garth, also a friend of Dryden, as one of the encouragers of his youthful genius:

"Well natur'd *Garth* inflam'd with early praise,  
And *Congreve* lov'd, and *Swift* endur'd my lays."

Another medical poet of this time was Sir Richard Blackmore, M.D. (Padua), F.R.C.P. (1653-1729), whose epic *Prince Arthur* (1695) was admired by John Locke, while his *Creation, a philosophical poem demonstrating the Existence and Providence of God* (1712) was praised by Addison, by Dr. Johnson and even by the splenetic John Dennis. Alas! we have to admit that Blackmore's name is now chiefly known as one of the poetasters pilloried in the *Dunciad*. Gosse<sup>(26)</sup> said of Blackmore: "As an epic poet not even Phoebus Apollo could have resuscitated him".

There is, however, one medical poet belonging, in spirit if not strictly in time, to this period, worthy of mention. This is Mark Akenside, M.D. (Leyden and Cantab), F.R.C.P., F.R.S. (1721-1770). He wrote *The Pleasures of Imagination* in 1744; and the *Hymn to the Naiads* in 1746. These works are overweighted by learning and exactitude, but Akenside had the true poetic gift and wrote some pleasing lyrics.

Directly contemporary with Akenside is Tobias Smollett, M.D. (Aberdeen) (1721-1771). He is chiefly known as a novelist, yet Sir Walter Scott regarded him as a poet of distinction (*Tobias Smollett, Lives of the Novelists*), and Isaac D'Israeli (*Calamities of Authors*, Vol. I, p. 17) wrote: "Smollett . . . is a great poet, though he has written little in verse". His poem, "Tears of Scotland," bewails the brutal severities of Cumberland's troops in the Highlands in pathetic and powerful verse; he wrote a charming lyric, "To Leven Water"; and many of the lines in his "Ode to Independence" have a fine lyric grandeur.

### ERASMUS DARWIN

The place of Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) as a poet is difficult to evaluate. The Lichfield physician was a forceful man and would certainly have insisted strongly upon his claims to rank as a medical poet. He was born at Elston Hall, Nottinghamshire, the fourth son of Robert Darwin. In 1741 he went to Chesterfield School, and in 1750 matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge. While there he wrote a poem on the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales. He took his B.A. in 1754 and in the same year proceeded to Edinburgh to study medicine, taking his M.B. at Cambridge in 1755. After an unsuccessful attempt at practice at Nottingham he moved to Lichfield, where he flourished as a leading physician. George III promised to make him his own physician if he would come to London, but Darwin declined the offer. He wrote much of his poetry in his carriage while visiting patients.

In 1778 he bought eight acres at Lichfield which he turned into a botanic garden. Miss Seward wrote some verses upon it which suggested

to Darwin the theme of the "Botanic Garden". The second part of this lengthy poem, written in the versification of Pope and entitled "The Loves of the Plants" appeared anonymously in 1789. The first fifty verses were those of Miss Seward and were inserted without any acknowledgment from Dr. Darwin. The first part of the "Botanic Garden" entitled "The Economy of Vegetation" appeared in 1792 and went into a fourth edition in 1799. The poem was extolled in its day and was translated into French, Portuguese and Italian. Horace Walpole admired it and Cowper, in a joint poem with Hayley, praised it. It was parodied by Canning in the *Anti-Jacobin* as the "Loves of the Triangles", which demonstrated its absurdities. Darwin's other poems appeared posthumously, "The Temple of Nature or the Origin of Society" (with philosophical notes) in 1803, and "The Shrine of Nature" later. A collected edition of his poetical works was published in 1807. Sir Walter Scott<sup>(18)</sup> said that Darwin's poetry belonged to a school of picturesque and florid description, of lofty metaphor and bold personification, of a diction rendered by inversion and the use of compound epithets as remote as possible from the tone of ordinary language. It was also too remote from common life and natural expression to retain its popularity. Coleridge<sup>(19)</sup> felt the force of Darwin's poetry but compared it to the Russian palace of old, "glittering, cold and transitory". "Darwin's bad poetry", said Leslie Stephen,<sup>(20)</sup> "showed a powerful mind". We may conclude that Erasmus Darwin was well advised when he sacrificed his early poetical impulses to his profession.

Darwin's more enduring fame rests upon his *Zoonomia* (1794-96) in which his views on evolution anticipated Lamarck. It contains many observations and principles which bear on the doctrines of evolution enunciated by his grandson, Charles Darwin, who translated Krause's *Life of Erasmus Darwin*, and added a sketch of his character and habits.

#### OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND GEORGE CRABBE

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a reaction against the "gaudy and inane phraseology" which marks the later diction of that time. Natural sentiments, feeling and simplicity superseded the polished verses which were coined in the brain and not in the heart. Revived interest in classical themes stimulated Thomas Gray and William Collins to seek for beauty and to hymn nature. Collin's "Ode to Evening" is not far removed from the spirit of Keats. The quiet domestic strain of Cowper's verse is another indication that poetry was reverting to the description of natural and simple scenes.

Two medical poets, Goldsmith and Crabbe, whose calling had taught them to be humane and sympathetic and to voice the "simple annals of the poor" are protagonists in this change, which heralded Wordsworth's establishment of poetry as a speech of "natural and everyday life".

Oliver Goldsmith, M.B. of Dublin and Oxford (1728-1774), wrote only two celebrated poems, "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village", but they were sufficient to establish his reputation as a poet. Burke

exclaimed: "What true and pretty pastoral images has Goldsmith in his 'Deserted Village'! They beat all—Pope and Phillips and Spenser, too, in my opinion, that is in the pastoral, for I go no further". Goldsmith's plea for preserving the rural population is as pertinent to-day as it was in 1770:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:  
Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made.  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride  
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied."

One cannot speak of Goldsmith without thinking of Samuel Johnson. His poem, *On the Death of Mr. Robert Levet, a Practiser in Physic*, is the greatest tribute we possess to the general practitioner of medicine. You all know the poem, but I cannot resist quoting two verses:

"In Misery's darkest cavern known,  
His useful care was ever nigh,  
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,  
And lonely Want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,  
No petty gain disdain'd by pride;  
The modest wants of ev'ry day  
The toil of ev'ry day supplied."

These lines epitomise the self-sacrificing life of those whom Dr. John Brown<sup>(21)</sup> called "Our Gideon Grays".

George Crabbe, surgeon and divine (1754-1832), after apprenticeship and assistant to a surgeon, "walked the hospitals" in London, married and practised in Aldeburgh among the poor. But he had already written poems and in 1779 he went to London with his manuscripts in his pocket. More fortunate than Chatterton, he found a patron in Edmund Burke, who helped him to publish *The Library* (1781), while Dr. Johnson criticized and emended his poems. He gave up medicine, took orders, had a plurality of livings, and thenceforward his lot was cast in pleasant places. He won the admiration and friendship of Walter Scott and died in his rectory at Trowbridge.

Crabbe's muse is a dark and realistic one. The sorrows and sufferings of the poor touched his heart and he saw no relief, no flutings of shepherds or dances round the maypole, in their incessant life of toil. "He was the last of the classicists in form; he was the first of the realists in matter." Beginning by imitating Pope he was faithful to the rhymed heroic couplet for all his major works to the end. His diction is sometimes strange and at times lapses into prose, but he is a powerful and impressive writer.

*The Library*, *The Village*, *The Parish Register*, *The Borough* and the *Tales of the Hall* all have their sombre force and all show traces of his medical experience. One may instance the line: "The true physician walks the

foulest ward" from *The Parish Register*, and these lines from *The Village*:

"Here on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,  
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head;  
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,  
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eyes;  
No friends with soft discourse his pain beguile,  
Or promise hope, till sickness wears a smile."

Crabbe's village poems are in a realistic vein of narrative poetry, which Masefield in our day, with greater art, has successfully revived in *The Widow in the Bye Street*.

#### NATURAL, ROMANTIC AND BALLAD POETRY: JOHN LEYDEN

Many years before Crabbe wrote, a Scottish school of poetry had emerged, which not only exalted the beauties of nature, but also gave a marked impulse to narrative and ballad poetry. James Thomson wrote the *Seasons*, Allan Ramsay and Robert Ferguson described the wit and humour of the Scottish peasantry, and later Robert Burns surpassed them in the love of nature and the description of human passion and character.

Interest awakened also in the romantic past and the historical songs and ballads. There were Gray's studies in Norse legends and the ancient poetry of Wales; Chatterton's imitations; the *Ossian* of James Macpherson which pretended to be a translation of Gaelic epics; and Percy's *Reliques*. This interest culminated in the poetry of Sir Walter Scott. "He was the last Minstrel, the last epic bard praising and calling to mind the men and exploits of an age which had passed away."

Associated with Scott's *Minstrelsy*, that collection of border ballads which led to the writing of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and his other poems, was a medical genius, John Leyden, M.D. (St. Andrews) (1775-1811), whose help in collecting the ballads and in writing modern versions of them Scott always appreciated and acknowledged. Leyden was the real Admirable Crichton. He was pre-eminent in the arts, medicine and the sciences and knew thirty-four languages. His poetical contributions to Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* and to the *Edinburgh Magazine* attracted attention and his poems, *Scenes of Infancy, descriptive of Teviotdale*, appeared in 1803. A surgeon and naturalist in India, he wrote on natural history, philology and literature and translated the Gospels into five languages. He was also a professor in the Bengal College and afterwards a judge in India. He died of fever at Batavia, a victim to his thirst for knowledge. His ballads take a higher place in literature than his longer poems. Scott pays this tribute to his memory in *The Lord of the Isles*:

"Quenched is his lamp of varied lore  
That loved the light of song to pour;  
A distant and a deadly shore  
Has Leyden's cold remains."

## THE REVOLUTIONARY POETS AND JOHN KEATS

The French Revolution had a profound influence upon the poets of the early nineteenth century. The doctrines of liberty, equality and fraternity, the natural rights that belonged to every man, were joyfully acclaimed by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, until the violence of the Reign of Terror and the aggression of Napoleon caused them to modify their opinions. Byron did not express these sentiments, but he was equally a revolutionary in his attacks on all the conventionality of social morality, religion and politics. He had a sympathy with nature, but his poetry is more intellectual than imaginative. Shelley's poetry is the reverse of this. It exhibits high flights of the imagination to which intellectual power though present is subordinated. Shelley in his outlook upon the moral, religious, social and political questions of his time is as revolutionary as Byron. Some of his verse, as in the *Ode to the West Wind* "form together the most sensitive, the most imaginative, and the most musical, but the least tangible lyrical poetry we possess".<sup>(22)</sup>

Into this wonderful age of poetry came John Keats (1795-1821), student of the United Hospitals of St. Thomas's and Guy's and Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries (1816). Poetry soon claimed his entire allegiance. "My last operation," he once told Brown, "was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety, but reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again." Keats is the poet of beauty. He was not concerned with the problems of his day which influenced his brother poets. In his writing he was a reincarnation of the Greek spirit of poetry—"a pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift". His work in the hospital wards brought him in touch with humanity and his clinical knowledge of the malady with which he was stricken influenced the melancholy strains in his poetry, as when he wrote:

"When I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,  
Hold like full garners the full-ripened grain;  
When I behold upon the night's starr'd face,  
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And feel that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance,"

or in his *Ode to a Nightingale* when he tells us "and for many a time I have been half in love with easeful death" and again in the same verse,

"Now more than ever it seems rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain."

The work that Keats did in his short life is an imperishable heritage of English poetry. He is the greatest of our medical poets and one of the greatest of the poets of all time. We can trace his far-reaching influence in the poets of the Victorian age, in Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold and especially in Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Swinburne.

As Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>(23)</sup> observed, the aim of Keats was not merely to create a paradise of art and beauty remote from the cares and interests of the world. "I have loved", said Keats, "the principle of beauty in all things."

## THOMAS BEDDOES

After this wonderful outburst of poetic fervour and enthusiasm there came, as usually happens, a period during which little poetry of permanent value was written, although Wordsworth still tuned his lyre, Tennyson had written his early poems and Browning was writing *Pauline*. During this period, which roughly corresponds to the reign of George IV (1820-1830), there was one poet who kept the torch of poetry aflame. His name is Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849), M.D. (Würzburg), and he has never received his due meed of recognition.

Beddoes was the nephew of Maria Edgeworth and the eldest son of Thomas Beddoes, M.D. (Oxon.), an eccentric and brilliant physician. The father was lecturer in Chemistry at Oxford, but had to resign the post on account of his intemperate advocacy of the principles of the French Revolution. He then practised at Clifton, where Sir Humphry Davy was his pupil and declared that "he had talents which would have exalted him to the pinnacle of philosophical eminence, if they had been applied with discretion". The words, as Lytton Strachey<sup>(24)</sup> commented, are curiously suggestive of the history of his son.

Thomas, the son, was educated at Charterhouse and Pembroke College, Oxford. At school he had written a novel, the beginnings of an Elizabethan tragedy and a good deal of verse. In 1821, while still an undergraduate, he collected some of these juvenilia into a volume, *The Improvisatore*. The next year saw the publication of *The Bride's Tragedy*, a play on the Elizabethan model, which revealed his genius as a master of dramatic blank verse. Only a true poet could have written lines like these:

"Here's the blue violet, like Pandora's eye,  
When first it darkened with immortal life."

Note again how he unites simplicity and splendour in this comparison:

"How glorious to live! Even, in one thought  
The wisdom of past times to fit together  
And from the luminous minds of many men  
Catch a reflected truth; as, in one eye,  
Light from unnumbered worlds and farthest planets  
Of the star-crowded universe, is gathered into one ray."

Beddoes received a laudatory review in the *Edinburgh*, written by Bryan Waller Proctor, in those days a poetic accolade.

Having taken his Arts degree at Oxford, Beddoes in 1825 began to study medicine at the University of Göttingen. He became engrossed in his profession; the new experimental work in physiology particularly interested him; and he translated Grainger's *Spinal Cord* into German and Schoenlein's *Diseases of Europeans* into English. But he could never

decide whether he wished to devote himself exclusively to physiology or to dramatic poetry. He found a fresh outlet for his adventurous spirit in the revolutionary tendencies that were then spreading over the Continent and imperilled his life on several occasions. Eventually his mind became affected and he ended his own life at Basel in 1849. He left behind him *Death's Jest Book; or The Fool's Tragedy*, a macabre and powerful dramatic play in blank verse, two unfinished tragedies, some exquisite lyrics and a poem "of grotesque and ominous humour", *The Oviparous Tailor*. Here is one great conception out of many from *Death's Jest Book*:

"I begin to hear strange but sweet sounds and the loud rocky dashing  
Of waves, where time into Eternity  
Falls into ruined worlds."

Sir Edmund Gosse, in collecting Beddoes's poems and letters, has disclosed the wonderful art with which this medical poet was endowed. Beddoes was in many respect a reincarnated Elizabethan. The twin heritages of Apollo, Medicine and Poetry, were always striving within him for the mastery. To the end he could never consent to give the pre-eminence to either.

#### ROBERT BRIDGES

Robert Seymour Bridges (1844-1930), O.M., M.B. (Oxon.), F.R.C.P., is the one medical Poet Laureate. Two other Laureates have been closely associated with Medicine. Nahum Tate (1652-1715), Poet Laureate in the reigns of William III and Queen Anne, translated the *Syphilis* of Fracastorius\* and Cowley's *History of the Plants* from Latin into English verse, and Robert Southey (Poet Laureate, 1813-1843) for a short time was a medical student in the anatomy school of Oxford. We can hardly regard Southey as a medical poet, though he used his medical knowledge in some of his writings.\*\*

By virtue of his length of days, Robert Bridges ranks as a poet of two distinct periods of history. His early work belongs to the Victorian period. He was approaching his sixtieth year when Queen Victoria died, but his poetic gifts did not receive full recognition until the twentieth century, which equally claims him.

In regard to Bridges's medical career, I may remind you that he was a student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital; house-physician for one year to Dr. Patrick Black, to whom he dedicated his Latin poem of 558 lines, *De Nosocomio Sti. Bartolomaei*; casualty physician (1877-1879), where he saw over 30,000 patients in one year; and assistant physician to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and to the Great Northern Hospital. In June, 1881, an attack of pneumonia followed by an empyema, from the effects of which he did not recover for eighteen

\* *Syphilis*. Written (in Latin) by that famous poet and physician, Fracastorius. English'd by Mr. Tate, London, J. Tonson, 1693, 12°.

\*\* Notably in his body-snatching ballad, *The Surgeon's Warning*, and in his prose work, *The Doctor*, which is full of curious medical knowledge. The hero of the book is a Dr. Daniel Dove, of Doncaster, who goes his rounds on his horse, Nobs. "The wit and humour of *The Doctor*", said Edgar Allan Poe, "have seldom been equalled."

months, ended his medical career, and medicine lost what he gave to poetry.

Some have regarded Bridges as a cloistered poet, steeped in classical lore and tradition, a master of prosody, a writer of beautiful lyrics—his poem “I have loved flowers” permanently enriched the English treasury of song—a lover of Nature, but standing aloof and apart from the struggles and desires of man. His labours and experience as a physician refute this conception. Only a heart throbbing with humanity could have inspired the beautiful stanzas *On a Dead Child* and perhaps only a children’s physician could have written it. The long narrative poem, *Eros and Psyche* (1885) a version of Apuleius, is a piece of charming fantasy with a spiritual meaning and moral. Compared with Pater’s prose telling of the myth in *Marius the Epicurean*, the poem does not lose by the comparison, said Professor Dowden.<sup>(25)</sup>

To that great poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, the poet and the physician equally contribute. Here Bridges summed up his life’s philosophy and surpassed himself. It was published in 1929 on his eighty-fifth birthday, and “in eloquence, wit and beauty of sound and imagery is unique as the work of an octogenarian”.

#### SIR RONALD ROSS

The literary and poetic gifts of Sir Ronald Ross (1857-1932) pale before his fame as the discoverer of the vector of malaria. In his slim volumes of verse there are some lovely things.

On August 20th, 1897, when he made his great discovery, he wrote these lines (which he sent in a letter to his wife), quoted from *Philosophies* by permission of Mr. John Murray, Sir Ronald’s publisher:

This day relenting God  
Hath placed within my hand  
A wondrous thing; and God  
Be praised. At His command

Seeking His secret deeds  
With tears and toiling breath,  
I find thy cunning seeds,  
O million-murdering Death.

I know this little thing  
A myriad men will save.  
O Death, where is thy sting?  
Thy Victory, O Grave?

O Exile, while thine eyes  
Were weary with the night  
Thou weepedst; now arise  
And bless the Lord of Light.

Hereafter let thy lyre  
 Be bondsman to His name;  
 His thunder and His fire  
 Will fill thy lips with flame.

He is the Lord of Light;  
 He is the Thing that is;  
 He sends the seeing sight;  
 And the right mind is His.

Here, as Sir John Squire writes to me, "The Muses of Medicine and Poetry met in a single illuminated moment and looked wonderingly at each other in recognition of their sisterhood".

#### POETRY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Robert Bridges was the only great medical poet who adorned the Victorian age, but the "new learning", the medical and scientific discoveries of that age exerted their influence upon its poetry and could be traced, if time permitted, in the writings of Tennyson and Browning.

Francis Thompson (1859-1907), the author of *The Hound of Heaven*, was a medical student at Owens College, Manchester. A definite reminiscence of the dissecting room is present (in an *Anthem of Earth*) in his allusion to the heart as "Arrased with purple like the house of kings".

Rudyard Kipling's poetry and prose reveal his interest in medicine, an interest strengthened by his friendships with Sir William Osler, Sir John Bland-Sutton, and Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson. In this connection, "Cholera Camp" and the lines beginning, "Wonderful herbs had our fathers of old" recur to mind.

As for the poetry of to-day, in the words of Cowley, "A war-like, various and tragical age is best to write of, but worst to write in". An estimate of the characteristics and significance of modern poetry is outside the scope of this address, even if I had the ability to undertake it. Great poets have written in the present century. Not only can we speak of Bridges and Hardy who earned their bays in the nineteenth century, but English literature has been dowered with the poems of John Masefield, Flecker, Rupert Brooke, A. E. Housman, Sir Henry Newbolt, Sir John Squire, Humbert Wolfe, Yeats, T. S. Eliot and many others.

I would here make special reference to one more "child of Apollo", Francis Brett Young, M.B. Famous as a novelist, he wrote *The Young Physician; Poems* (1919), and in 1944 he brought out his wonderful epic poem, *The Island*, which expresses the patriotic fervour of English history through the centuries up to the present time.

We have reached the end of our poetical pilgrimage, in which I have endeavoured to show how important a part medical poets have played in shaping and directing our national poetry. The influence of medicine

and natural science on English poetry is a much wider subject and here only incidental reference has been possible, as in the founding of the Royal Society in the seventeenth century and the friendship of poets with medical men. We may be justly proud of the contribution that our profession has made to English poetry. Not alone has it given exquisite lyricists like Campion, Cowley and Henry Vaughan, humane and realistic poets as were Goldsmith and Crabbe, but also two immortals, John Keats and Robert Bridges.

The study of the children of Apollo enables one important conclusion to be drawn, namely, that the Muse of Poetry tolerates no divided allegiance in the perfection of her art. This was fortunately realised by Keats when he put down his lancet to take up his wonderful lyre, and by Bridges in retiring from practice. Others have not been so perspicacious. Campion, it is true, combined the two vocations with good success. Goldsmith might have endowed the world with more poetry if the success of *The Traveller* had not led him to don the handsome roquelaure, the purple silk small-clothes, the sword, the gold-headed cane and the full-dress doctor's wig in a vain attempt to achieve success as a physician. Henry Vaughan was a country practitioner and for the remaining forty years of his life his muse was silent. Mark Akenside had a large and fashionable practice and became physician to Queen Charlotte, but thenceforward he wrote no more of those odes which Hazlitt pronounced to be superior to those of Wordsworth. Sir Richard Blackmore tried to combine the arts of medicine and poetry. He scribbled verse incessantly in coffee-houses in the intervals between consultations and in his chariot when visiting patients, and for his reward earned the derision of Pope and Swift and was bidden by his colleague, Garth, "to learn to rise in sense and sink in sound". The twin allegiance to medicine and poetry, as we have seen, perplexed Beddoes to the end of his life.

Hence, if the student of medicine receives the divine afflatus, he should decide forthwith which altar of Apollo he should serve if he desires to be pre-eminent in either vocation. Many "mute inglorious Miltons" have adorned the profession of medicine and have been aided and solaced in their art by their hidden poetic gifts. Others, like Sir Henry Halford (a descendant of Henry Vaughan) who prided himself on his Latin verses, Sir Ronald Ross, Sir Henry Head and Sir Charles Sherrington, have written poems of no inconsiderable merit in the intervals of an active professional life or in relaxation from the pursuit of important researches. To scale the supreme heights of Parnassus the medical poet must relinquish the practice of medicine, while he enriches his poetry by the knowledge of humanity, of philosophy and the love of nature and mankind which he has acquired in his profession.

It is good for English poetry that it has received so much from British medicine. It is good for British medicine that it has produced poets. Their influence is needed in these troublous and war-like times, for as Shelley wrote in *A Defence of Poetry*, "Poets are the hierophants of an

unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present".

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The fine educational and cultural vision of Rabindranath Tagore in founding his community centre of Santiniketan at Bolpur in his native Bengal was described to the Royal India Society by Mr. Leonard Elmhirst, founder of Dartington Hall, who had himself taken part in the venture. He outlined the approach at Santiniketan to all aspects of Indian culture; the marrying of the religious and the secular in daily life as demonstrated in the many festivals of the seasons; research into the folk art and music and ancient literature; the cultivation of an international outlook. Tagore's approach inevitably had an impact on the whole of India—on the education of youth, on the theatre, on music, design, and architecture. Mr. Elmhirst suggested, as a British memorial to Tagore, the endowment of fellowships enabling two or three British specialists to spend a period of one or two years at Santiniketan and experience at first hand its simple and attractive synthesis of the best things of the East and the West.